# *WINGED VICTORY*

BY

C. H. B. KITCHIN.

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# WINGED VICTORY

BY

C. H. B. KITCHIN

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

CURTAINS

BASIL BLACKWELL
OXFORD BROAD STREET

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MATRI
FILIUS.

# PART I.

## THE CITY.

"Not till the fire is dying in the grate,
Look we for any kinship with the stars."

*George Meredith.*

## THE PERSECUTING TENDENCY.

WHICH of the prophets have not your fathers killed?
Their flesh is dust that blows about your floors,
Their bones the pillars of your splendid doors,
While with their blood the drinking wells are filled.

Because they could not bring you consolation,
You made of them the lamps to light your feasts
Or careless flung their bodies to the beasts,
Crowning them with a martyr's coronation.

Because they railed upon your petty ways
And marred the happy structure of your dreaming,
You cried a curse upon them for blaspheming
The comfortable God that had your praise.

Because they strayed beyond the common mould
And would not use with you the common measure,
You found in their rebellion the pleasure
Of turning human flesh and blood to gold.

Yet, be assured, their tongues shall not be stilled.
Their eyes like stars behold you from the sky,
While in the sea and wind their voices cry
"Which of the prophets have not your fathers killed?"

## THE IMITATIVE TENDENCY.

THE devotees of the Eternal Ape
Into each others' faces idly stare
In vacant admiration, mouth agape,
Hoping to see themselves reflected there.

# IDEAL.

YOU have desired, and are now satisfied,
Making perfection easy and the joy
Of your attainment lasting. We are fated
To harsher wandering, harassed night and day
By images that shrink into the dark
And are but sorry lovers, whose faint kiss
Alluring with the ideal bitterness
Of unachieved intention, carries us
Beyond the living pathways of the flesh
To marble dreams that vanish with the moon.

But when you lie asleep, well satisfied
With all the lively fruits of your desire,
Then we arise, and blinded by no glare
Of your contempt, renew the solemn quest
In those wide spaces, where the night and day
Mingle together grey and gold, rejoicing
To build their images for our abuse;
While as a form that leaps across a mirror
The secret phantom smiles—and passes on.

O wistful hope and cruel aftermath!
There shall be no fulfilment. We are cold
With endless watching, while the dancing flame
Strays like a coloured moth through perfumed airs
Of langorous enchantment, pale endeavour
To wake and hold the image of a dream.

## CONVERSATION.

*He.* MY love!
*She.* We are not lovers, you and I.
We are too old. The candle like to die
Recks nothing of the fare around it spread,
And they that feast have other lights instead.
We are grown old,—and I the quicklier.
*He.* For me, at least, there is none lovelier
Than you in age or youth, in wisdom old
But ever young in love.
*She.* Your lips are cold
And cheat the words you utter.
*He.* Think it not.
May the grand curse that dooms Iscariot
Rest upon me and mine, if I deceive.
Whence, love, this shamed reluctance to believe
My perfect adoration?
*She.* I am proud,
And being older, mark the thunder-cloud
Ere it descend on us and summer days
Be soiled with winter rain. The fatal ways

Of fleeting passion have passed over me
And leave me wiser.

*He.* Love, am I not he
That swore, one golden day, a faithfulness
To last for ever? Must I now confess
That I have failed in thought and word and deed?

*She.* Nor deed nor word have fallen short the need
Of your long kindness.

*He.* And, since thought is mine,
Whence have you skill to trace the sad decline
Of my desire?

*She.* I am grown old and wise,
And seeing the shadow overhang your eyes,
I read the message. Though the cinder burn
With ancient will, and lofty fames yet turn
The gleaming faces of their charity
On me (who fear alone the treachery
Of words misspoken), thus far in the night
I mark the quenching of the flickering light,
And kiss the ember, ere it cease to glow.

*He.* I am tormented. Puppets in a show
We dance the jig until the showman ends
The play; and if the dance make no amends
For the long sleep to come within the box
Where lie the cardboard actors, music mocks
The dalliance we dancers might have won.

The hour is precious, and the evening sun
Lights the enchanted stage most splendidly.

*She.* "Queen" you have called me. Of that majesty
I should not be forgetful. Rise and go.
I am grown weary of your puppet-show,
Its make-believe and sweet alluring lies.
No longer will I tempt hypocrisies
From your complacent lips; arise and leave me.
No art of yours were worthy to deceive me.
Go—without words.

*He.* Nay, hear me.

*She.* I would rest,
A broken dancing-doll. My last request
Is "Leave me."

*He.* Then I go,—your worshipper—

*She.* Take her this kiss, and say I gave it her.

## CARNIVAL.

TO-NIGHT the city, like a rose
Full-blown with scattered petals, glows
In fascinating tints of fire,
And, dyed on every burnished spire
With opalescent wreaths of mist,
Sends out to meet in common tryst
The hurrying inhabitants.
A sentimental crimson slants
Across the sky, and in the haze
The lamps of green and orange blaze
To grace the frolic of the fair.

To-night the poorest lodgers dare
To leave their rooms and take the air,
Caught by a wild impulsiveness
That sweeps across the ugliness
Of idle suburbs, tangled streets,
And leads where everybody meets—
The scintillating grand parade

With gleaming tiers of lamps arrayed—
The road that circles round the park
Where white tents shimmer in the dark—
The gardens, and the cricket-ground.

The townsfolk wander round and round
In beatific pairs, and bound
To sudden tunes, or arm in arm
Deeply inhale the subtle charm
Of orgiastic liberty.
The whole world is the sanctuary
Wherein they celebrate the rites
Of wakened love, and woo the night's
Capacious cloak to guard their joy—
While carelessly the breezes toy
With all the secrets of their bliss.

No man so old that he must miss
The dainty solace of a kiss,
Nor is there any girl so plain
That she is treated with disdain.
The fury of the festival
Brings hope and enterprise to all.

The riders on the roundabouts
Amaze the screech-owl with their shouts,
While some try houp-la for a penny

And gloat upon the prize (if any),
Or meditate the splendid boon
Of an ascending fire-balloon.
And some forget themselves in dances.

Others are bolder, and take chances
Upon the gilded car that glances
Along the switch-back railway-line,
Quick as the lightning. Others pine
To ride abroad in motor-cars
And catch the rocket's falling stars
Upon the flashing bar of steel
That runs athwart the steering wheel.

But there are others yet who glide
In darkness past the riverside,
Borne by the current in canoes
Amid the variegated hues
Of river mist, and river trees
That bend their arching canopies
Down to the water, and caress
The heads that sway in idleness
To the seductive rhythmic tone
Emitted by a gramophone.

Strange dreams are theirs, and moods intense
Lead swiftly over the immense

New spaces of enlightened vision,
Which, recking little of derision,
Soars upwards on an eagle's wing
Exultant in its journeying.
Nor is it very transcendental
To view reality as mental.
The common round of every day
In one brief ecstacy makes way
For greater needs that brave regret.

So is it now the sun has set,
And will be till the dawn shall rise
Quenching the starlight in the eyes
And drowning laughter on the lips—
The fatal dawn of love's eclipse
And sterner melancholy hours.

Yet bloom awhile the night's pale flowers.

# VITAM DEGERE MORE FERAE TALES NEC TANGERE CURAS.

## I.

HERE is the centre of the town, where stands
This shuttered house. The topmost room commands
From two wide windows a dense grove of spires
And chimney stacks ablaze with hidden fires,
A thousand domes whose gilt the moon still shows;
While on all sides aslant in endless rows
Lie the dull slate-black roofs that make the city.
Wild is the moon and ignorant of pity,
And in the depth the driving beam discloses
The little courts where grow the jaded roses.

This from the window. Near it in the gloom,
Like a pale figure in a sunken tomb
Drearily wakeful, still as carved in stone,
Lies the self-styled philosopher alone—
Though the mind lives, and feverishly paces,
By every path, the body which encases
The flame within. Far flung into the night

It leaps bewildered every dazzling height,
Every abyss of darkness. No release.
His are the eyes which long have sought for peace
And found it not, the eyes which may not close.
His are the ears whose only music flows
Up from the growling street. A moon beam chances
To gain his lips, and playing past them dances
From cheek to brow—till with a sigh he turns
And gazing at the window-pane that burns
With smoke-framed glory, woos the glamour cast
Across his vigil, finding speech at last.

II.

"How long, O frozen fire, have you awaited
These words of mine? How long have I been bound
Body and soul by the corroding spell
That rises from the beating heart outside?
I have been all my days a part of it,
Receiving all the currents of rich blood
That gushed around it, feeling in every limb
The tremors of the sprawling corpse, myself
An atom in the monstrous ebb and flow.
And now I see destruction of the flesh
So dear to me, and ruin of these stones
Whence the faint trickle of my life has leapt;

The city is corrupted. Many nights
Have I, as now, in wakeful pain absorbed
Its moon-rent agony.

The body shall grow old, and taste of death.
And I that am a fragment in the bone
Of the great corpse, am I to live for ever,
Spirit without a body? Pitiless
The gods have spoken doom. There is no soul
Of their creation save for suffering.
My hope was that this travail should bring forth
Some flower of beauty, some enduring pact
With ineluctable time, memorial
Of our endeavour. We have laboured much
And reap no harvest. Neither good nor evil
Bears fruit for us, the children of the plain
Where nothing grows, labourers of the vineyard
Whose grapes are burnt out ashes in the mouth.
We are white bubbles blown about the world
To burst when kissing the circumference.
I and my fellow-workers toil in vain
Creating nightmares. Gaze upon the city,
Gaze, tortured eyes, and drink your fill of it,
Marking the hell within your paradise,
The lichens of corruption that close round
Devouring stone and iron and human flesh.

No soul is born save as predestinate
For misery. O fool! Look in your heart
And see if you are verily one with them
That have been your companions. From my youth
I have known all your terrors, O Lord God,
All your afflictions. Job and all the prophets
Shall be my witnesses. I too with them
Have lived apart, untainted, undismayed
By all the clamour of iniquity,
Unloved, unhonoured. I have my reward
Knowing the loss of honour, and of love
That once was in my grasp, a petalled flower
Whose bloom I left for others, recompensed
By one frail gust of scent. I am repaid
For labour lost with coin as counterfeit
As my achievement. Beauty died for me
Yet striving to engender it; wherefore
The weeds of my desire are green and rank
With spiny shoots. O lamentable tears!
I am ashamed . . .

What is it then, sweet-honeyed angel-soul,
That you would have? Self-pitying at the last
You cannot grace the final harmony
With resignation. Lovely soul of mine,
You are my curse, and I at once the victim

And the tormentor. Spare the lash awhile
Of scorn or pitying tenderness. The city
Is more than you, and it shall be destroyed.

Poorer than dogs that prowl about the street,
Seek I for crumbs, and mar the master's table
With my unhallowed whining at the doors."

III.

He ceased, and the procession of the hours
Gliding as ever down the rigid towers
Of time went onward, till at dawn's beguiling
Though his lips moved not, yet his eyes were smiling.

## THE BALLOON-MAN.

TO MRS. C. K. PHILIPS.

*(Henley, 1920).*

LADIES, though the clouds to-day
  Threaten, and the gale displeases,
Though your hats are blown away—
  Buy balloons and brave the breezes.

Firmly held upon a string,
  (Acrobats on their trapezes),
In the wind's worst blustering,
  Bought balloons will brave the breezes.

Finest hats quit fairest heads,
  But the Lord will bless your sneezes.
Oranges and greens and reds,
  Buy balloons and brave the breezes.

## SERENADE.

DESCEND at last, nocturnally adored!
In vain for me the horses of the night
Racing from dreary dusk to fatal dawn,
Neigh petulant among the winds of night
And mock me with the menaces of dawn.
Have you not heard the horses of the night?
Descend at last, nocturnally adored!

In vain for me the wailing violins
Make answer from the woods, that furtively
The fading sun of these December days
Has vanished from the marshes. Reed by reed
The steaming marshes have entangled him,
And there is nothing left, except the shroud
Of creeping mist that eddies round your tower.
The last brown leaf is fallen, and the trees
Stand bare as leering gibbets. In your pride
Regard the wailing of the violins.

Descend at last, nocturnally adored!
Come as that queen who in the hour of death,
When drums were beating through the palaces
The dirge of lamentation, first alone
Rose from her couch, and taking coloured robes
Arrayed herself in splendour, royally
Crowned with the ancient crown—then gently passed
Down the long marble stair, and by the gates
Where stood the mourners, at the last revealed
Trailed langorously ropes of emerald.

Descend at last, nocturnally adored!
In vain for me the horses of the night
Racing from dreary dusk to fatal dawn
Neigh petulant among the winds of night,
And mock me with the menaces of dawn.
Have you not heard the horses of the night?
Descend at last, nocturnally adored!

## FROM A LETTER.

"ALL day I talk with kind companions
(Who are for ever with me, like the poor),
Turning a darkened mind to this or that
Vague interest; talk from the afternoon
And on and on to lighting of the lamps,
Till casually someone mentions you,
And I am pale and silent.
Friendly eyes
Question the mood: "Since when are you so tired?"
And I reply as ever carelessly,
Meeting the gaze of kind companions
With resignation.
Smiles are ashen flowers
And life a desert, since you went away."

## THE SOLIPSIST.

MY thoughts are veils behind the eyes,
That fitfully create a world
Of variegated flags unfurled
Beneath a dome of ashen skies.

The mental breeze blows treacherous
And eddies round from pole to pole,
While steaming clouds of blindness roll
Their pale brocades, impervious

To psychic suns that blaze within,
And eat with concentrated ray
The labour of my heart away.
Sterile, alas, they cannot win

Applause from any other brain
Than that in which they glow; nor throw
A beam upon the virgin snow
That shrouds a secret lunar plain.

Caged in the self-begotten wall,
They cannot penetrate the night
Of any darkened satellite,—
If satellites they have at all.

And I, the great impalpable
  Must burn on their behalf, and bear
  The fever of their inward glare,
Until the utmost particle

Of my frail essence melts to mist,
  And fatal floods of doom disperse
  The atoms of my universe,—
Existence failing to exist.

Yea, all these rivers, hills and towns
  Virtues and vices, right and wrong,
  Painting and poetry and song,
Monarchs, philosophers and clowns,—

All the tremendous world that I
  (Myself the mystic overlord)
  Have built so bravely and adored,
Shall perish with me when I die.

And yet, the thought of death is mine,
  Merely a palpitating veil
  That sways amid the mental gale,
Impertinent. Why then resign

The prospect of eternal life?
  Death is a philosophic jest
  Of mine,—and not the pleasantest.
Meanwhile descends another knife

To sever hope, and cut away
  The core of being, utterly.
  If I have made eternity,
"For ever" is a single day.

Indeed, since time and space depend
  Upon my gesture, can I place
  Much confidence in time and space,
When they declare I have no end?

My thoughts, alas, are veils that blow
  Hither and thither, fancy-free,
  Or suns engendering for me
A substance I can never know.

So I, unable to aspire
  Upon the wings of *thought* to rise,
  Reluctantly direct my eyes
Towards the mountain of *desire*.

Here is the path where I must guide
  My footsteps, fleet and fugitive,
  Knowing I shall not cease to live
Till all desires be gratified.

Hail ultimate reality!
  Hail truth supreme and absolute!
  No mental process may refute
The appetite's ontology!

## PEACE-DAY REQUIEM.

THE night is warm. Faint summer rain is falling,
And to the park, like coloured beetles crawling,
Come in huge droves the worshippers of fire.
For them the sky shall wear a crown of flame,
And livid jewels of a strange desire
To mock the laboured aftermath of shame,
And bid the phosphorescent snake aspire
To scale the Godhead, whence the curse arose.

Deep on all sides the sacred hunger grows
With craving for the tawdry ecstacy,
Lust of the eye, the smell of sacrifice,
Reverberation of the symphony,
Wherein the voice of thunder and the cries
Of devotees shall consecrate the hour.

So Moloch too in Carthage long ago
Found ministers to give the living dower
Of their oblation; while the drums beat slow
The dirge of children whom the brazen-lipped
Kissed and caressed with hot metallic hands
Whence steaming blood upon the altars dripped.
Such reverence the deity demands.

Long is the silence broken by the rain
And expectation murmured in the dark,
While round each heart yet closer coils the chain
Of agonised foreboding,—till a spark
Brings ultimate fulfilment, and the old
Brown cardboard corpses show the life within.
Then waxes great the dragon gleaming gold,
That fabled dragon called the Lucifer,
And seeks once more to stroke the Seraphin
With tongues high-darted, vivid tongues that stir
The angels from their dreams. The house of Heaven
Suffers a second chaos, and the hordes
Of Hell ride through the air with burning swords,
Vaunting the fury of the unforgiven.

Not now for you these banners are unfurled,
Nor weeps the moaning snake its eyes away
In coloured rain for you. The veil of grey,
The smoky veil that dims the shrieking world,
Is dust of magic stars,—a coronal
That had been yours to-night. Alas, the gaze
Of man is idly winged, ephemeral,
And sees but smoke, that mingles with the haze
Of evening, and wanders riverwards
Across deserted streets and hidden squares,
While the uncherished moon alone regards
The fleeting symbol of forgotten prayers.

## DEPENDENCE.

MYSELF a dreamer, I have chanced to glide
Into the dream that lulls another head,
And, when it wakes from sleep well satisfied,
I shall become a nightmare of the dead.

## FLORESTAN, ADVISED BY HIS FRIENDS TO KILL HIMSELF, REPLIES.

"SO you would have me now with folded hands
Kneel as a reverent dreamer, giving thanks
For life that has been splendid,—for that spring,
That summer and that autumn which are gone,
Leaving the emblems of a wintry pride
To usher in my sleep.
I, even I, am put away with cold
Outworn festivities, whereafter arms
Of younger prime shall drive the masquerade
Through the appointed turning of the wheel.
Well is it I have learned to take from you
What I have given others!
These are the gifts wherewith I shall be crowned,—
First sleep that has no dreams, then memory
Blank as a tarnished mirror, gratitude
From you perhaps, that I have left the stage
For newer prancing. O these limbs of youth,
With their relentless striding over the boards

That you will strew again with hyacinth,
Purple-striped crocus, hymeneal gold
Of orange-blossom from the coloured South!
I see their buds unfolding. Grant me yet
This fevered picture of the coming year
When I shall be the dust upon the floors,
When I shall be the mockery of winds
Rising in March, to toss your tangled hair.
Life is a trailing garment set with pearls
That once were my adornment. Fear me not;
For I have laid aside such robes to-day,
And am not yet so humble as to clutch
The lovely folds that fall from other shoulders;
I, that have acted well, and know the time
Of graceful exit.

"Your looks are heavy, faithful friends of mine,
And grudge my lingering. Is it so soon
That I must lay myself in lavender,
Thus pitiably self-embalmed? So soon
That I must take your garland ready woven
Of solemn bays, the proffered ornament
Wherein I am the victim and the priest?

"There is an altar, you have often said,
Compassed with cypress, girt with gripping sprays

Of twisted ivy, consecrate with prayer
And piping of sad mouths. Here sacrificed
The old believers, while the steps ran red
With steaming blood, whereof the exultant trees
Drank greedily.
There you would have me give myself as food
To earth that hungers for me, passionate
To claim this body as its own, these lips
That are yet strong for kisses. Earth to earth,
Fear nothing, I am given. Twine my head
With your dark leaves, and lead me forth with singing
Into the forest. I am yours to make
The ending as you please.

"Winter is in the air, and wintry dawn
Grins coldly from the East. Into the damp
weet fragrance of the cracking leaves that rot
Beneath our feet, go quickly with no words.
Go now, lest I am tempted; for the breeze
Passing across these hills I leave to you,
Wafts me the burden of another spring."

# PART II.

## ESCAPE.

Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
Verweile doch! du bist so schön!
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen . . .

*Goethe: Faust*

## VITA NOVA?

### I.

YOUR lips confess not, but your eyes declare
That I have dreamed too long, and in despair
I know not if my frozen apathy
Be life's supreme achievement, or if I
Should rather make much effort to prevent
Time's trickling sand from closing argument
With me, and scarcely formulate desire.
Was it well done to burn with such a fire,
Or earthy, of the earth-worm, to aspire?

### II.

Drawn by the thought which dances in your brain
And beckons me, relentless suzerain,
To join the measure stepping as I may,
My unskilled feet, grotesque with interplay
Between the old desire of harmony
(Which the false movement mars regretfully),
And the new need of swift obedience,
Trace out an ill-stroked figure, having sense
Neither of knowledge nor of innocence.

## III.

It may be that the sun has learned to smile
  At night's insatiate and transparent guile
Of eager onslaught, knowing in his heart
  That night and day perforce have equal part
Of sky's dominion, while the victory
  Resigned to-day, to-morrow's gain shall be;
So might you, knowing the magic of your power
  Mark the amusement of the passing hour
  And smile on me whose peace it shall devour.

## IV.

With cowardice, "Too long," and fear, "Too late,"
  Upon your sovereignty I meditate,
But recognise at length that it is vain
  To struggle any whit or to refrain;
For I am guided like a chrysalis
  To inward stirring from the outward kiss
Of golden sun that penetrates all shells.—
  So grows the mystery in hidden cells
  While winged life against the husk rebels.

## REVERIE.

CALM,—and I feel that I have ceased to live;
So thick and warm the air, so grey and pale
The spires of the horizon. Is it thus
The dead receive their echoes of the world?
Blessed with a perfect lassitude are they,
And through a dream of falling rose-petals
Faintly behold the sun's clean images
Transmuted kindly for them.
I were dead
Myself, amid this darkened room of mine
Gazing enchanted through the open window,
Did I not see you walking in the road
Pale as the gloom, and weak with hopelessness
Of a delight which you have lost awhile.

Alas, I live. Your eyes upturned to mine,
Blindly unseeing, raise about my head
The darkness of a forest. Ancient trees
Stretch out huge limbs above me, branches coiling
With tangled curves to veil the midnight sky.
The burden of the night weighs heavily
Upon my heart, and all the leaves are silent.

Meanwhile the tawny panthers of desire
With feet of velvet and quick smouldering eyes
Circle beneath the moon of Africa,
And from the clearings dismally the pygmies
Croon unavailing charms. The moaning swells
And drives the dance. O Love, you too are caught
Amid the meshes of the velvet net
Cast round us by the panthers of desire.
You too must seek and find not, tree by tree,
Groping faint-fingered through the scented darkness.
This night are you lost with me in the forest.

This night, I am resigned. I, seeking you,
Would help you find the other. Forest paths
Entice my feet—if haply I can lead you
Out to the open wind-swept plain alone,
Then go my way. The panthers of desire
Circle beneath the moon of Africa,
But we are lost amid their labyrinth.

Your eyes have left me, and your parting step
Beats muffled on the pavement. I am here
Murmuring vaguely by the window-ledge
About a wood of shadows. In the night
The spires are laid away like scenery
Torn from an empty stage. The idle calm
Is broken by a knocking on my door,
Till someone enters quickly,—and I live!

## CRISIS.

NOW I am strengthened at last to lay aside
All prettiness of soul, and with relentless hand
To clasp this of all moments in the tide
Of long disaster. I am sanctified
With crown and sceptre of my wakened will's command.

The spiritual lips which are my soul,
Unhesitating bend to kiss the cleansing fire
That burnt Isaiah in the glowing coal.
I am a rock whereover waters roll,
Though water cannot smooth the sharpness of desire,

To bind the present in the swirling blaze
By which I am consumed, burnt intimately by
The fury of all furnaces. Dead days
Are melted in the crucible and praise
With drops of virgin gold the sudden alchemy.

I am the struggle of the breaking day
Triumphant over night. The pale horizon strides
Over my limbs, revealing them as clay
Wrought finely with affliction. Prone are they
Beneath the trampling horsemen of the dawn who rides

Splendidly wild across me. Comfort me
  O grave continual dance of angels, and caress
With your kind shadows' mute solemnity
These dazzled eyes of mine, which cannot see
  Whether I am ensnared with grief or happiness.

## MARINE INTERMEZZO.

HERE is the end at last of journeying,
Where wave and cloud have woven harmony
Of their affliction, and the curving sky
Catches the earth in his eternal ring,
Soft-moulded with the dust of stars that die,
Light-gleaming with the lamps that spirits bring
In honour of the dead, faint-echoing
With words that move on lips that cannot lie.
Meanwhile the unwearied lover of the land,
Climbs to the brink of unassuaged delight,
Kisses and dies;—till Phoenix-like the grand
Immutable procession of the night
Breathes down austere the warmth of its command,—
Life to the dead, and hunger burning bright
On jaded lips that lick the barren sand.
Once more the sea advances, kisses, dies,
Then finding resurrection, wanders over
The ancient road anew, to clutch the prize
With eager hands for ever raised in vain.
Chaste are the arms of death, and chaste the lover
That rises from the grave to love again.

## FÊTE GALANTE.

WHEN they that dance to-night shall dance no more,
When the last hesitating note is fled
From honeyed harp and flute and violin,
When the dark years shall dimly usher in
The frail enchanted footsteps of the dead
Through garden, hall and moonlit corridor,
Those absent ones who here have danced before,—
Then finally perfected shall I too
From the cool fragrant darkness rise and dance,
With bright eyes burning, spectral eyes that glance
Amid the ghosts, yet only seek for you:
Then will you hold high revelry with me.

Thus far is it predestined. Nor shall we,
Though swept as golden harp-strings of romance
With hope of human pleasure, learn to trace
The pattern of perpetual embrace,
Till with unearthly everlasting limbs
We glide together past this antique wall

(Where now the faint prophetic shadow climbs),
And know that whether shadows rise or fall,
Slighter than they, we neither wax nor wane.

So, love, have I found courage to disdain
The present parting, and the ephemeral
Clamorous crowd that madly surges through
Garden and moonlit corridor and hall;
For then, at last I have my will of you,
(I, that am now presumptious to adore),
When they that dance to-night shall dance no more.

# FOUR SUN-DIALS.

## I. THE ORTHODOX.

THE world revolves and carries me
  Across the pathway of the sun,
And I adore the deity
  In day-long reverence, begun
When first his feeble shadow falls
  Upon my stone at break of day,
And ended when the night's dark walls
  Descend and drive his flame away.

Eternally his acolyte,
  I find his essence most divine,
When noon proclaims the solemn rite
  Of solar eyes that gaze to mine
As friend to friend, and face to face
  The god and worshipper may stand
Bound in a transient embrace
  Quick as the waving of a hand.

And I would have it thus, my king,
  Nor crave for longer union;
For should your native splendour cling
  Too passionately on the stone
That is my body, spirit-breath
  Would leap from out these limbs of mine
Like an ascending sword of death—
  And leave below an empty shrine.

## II. THE REBEL.

SINCE I have been emboldened to despise
The red-hot fury of your flaming eyes,
Grasp of your hands and flood of scorching hair
Encompassing me daily in the glare
Of fevered noons—my longing for the light
Is changed to darkened love, and craves the night
To pour upon my wounds a star-cold balm.

New dreams have I—grey castles and the calm
Lure of old rivers, drift of idle snows
About the pole, whereon obscurely glows
The ancient glimmer of the Northern Blue
Steadfastly all the ice-bound winter through,
Immense ravines where never a single ray
Of yours can pierce the blackness or display
The crystal treasury of craggy walls.
Me too the wisdom of the owl enthralls,
The dusky moth, the vague invisible tread
Of lemurs prowling to devour the dead,
Low mist of Autumn, secrets of the earth
Heaving at midnight with prodigious birth
Of subterranean monsters, mole and faun
Mixed cunningly to dwarf, or leprechaun.

But most of all, my ravished heart is set
Upon the moon. Caught in her silver net
My stony limbs are loosed and find release
From worship of you, drinking in the peace
Of your pale sister. Marble-browed is she,
Solemn and wise; nor ever looks on me
Save with a smile of pitying disdain.

Alas, poor lover, how am I to gain
Celestial glory? Who am I to scale
The pillars of her throne, or how prevail
Against the earth-born curse that makes the ground
A rigid chain wherein my limbs are bound?
O sun, forgive me! Born of your desire,
I am tormented with a raging fire
That is not quenched with rain, and your embrace
Is now foul horror to me. Veil your face
And turn your eyes away—nor seek to claim
My customary homage to your flame,
My passive love, the faint responsive thrill
That echoed to the pressure of your will.

The moon too casts a shadow, and awhile
The sundial writes the record of her smile.

## III. THE SENTIMENTALIST.

"Horas non numero nisi serenas."

THE eyes of him who long ago
  Did carve upon my flesh this phrase,
Are blinded now and lie below
  The grass where straying cattle graze.

Since then, innumerable eyes
  Have looked on me to mark the hours,
And perished as the butterflies
  That die at fading of the flowers.

And I through centuries remain
  Brave and erect, and carry yet
Their eager glances in my brain,
  Which live there, though the world forget.

For these, my tearless eyes of stone
  That gazed at theirs impassively
Are ever open, and alone
  Are globed with immortality.

And yet sometimes, when bleak and bare
  The ground is white with winter snows,
I too for death have breathed a prayer,
  And cursed these eyes which cannot close.

## IV. DISILLUSIONED.

DAY follows night, and the blue must take it in turn with the grey.
Winter relentlessly grim, summer triumphantly gay,
Spin with the flight of the world, while each gives a place to the other.
What does it matter to me? Brother comes beckoning brother,
"April arise from the grave," or "April descend to the dead!"
Dance in your circular dance, scatter your gifts on my head,
Months of the year—I am old; though once I was touched by your tears,
Once I could laugh when you laughed, pace to the stride of the years,
Worship the riches of spring and sob for the falling of leaves,
Passion is dead long ago. Love is but passion that grieves.

What does it matter to me how changes the face of the sky,
Whether the hand of the sun points to the minutes that die,
Whether the robes of the storm roll round him a mantle of gloom,
Whether the world and its pomp turn at the last to a tomb?
Whether it freezes in Hell, or Heavenly carpets are gold,
What does it matter to me—loveless and centuries old?
Heaven and Hell are a lie, while over the universe range,
Vanquishing ultimate hope, chance and monotonous change.

## NIGHT-SONG.

O NIGHT wide-streaming through my window,
O waning moon and cruel starlight,
O curling mist about the river,
Grant me your peace.

No dawn again shall bid me welcome,
No rising sun, no scent of morning,
No blaring call of life triumphant,
Can tempt me now.

Thus happy let me die contented
Before the day dissolves my dreaming;
I have known love in all completeness
And ask no more.

Now is the time, when I am sleeping,
Now is the time, O solemn reaper,
To swing in one stroke swift and fatal
The golden scythe.

## PRAYER FOR A SUDDEN DEATH.

GOD gleaming red and gold in flame.
God thundering in sky and sea,
I daring to invoke Your Name
Pray now that of Your majesty
This blessing may descend on me.

Grant that before my spirit sings
The plaintive mumbled songs of age,
And quickened life no longer springs
Across the ever darkening stage
Whereover is my pilgrimage,

Before my sense of loss and gain
Is blurred to cold indifference,
Before I lose both joy and pain
Wherein is wrought experience,
And life no longer burns intense

Before this hour of soul's decline
To idle calm, self-satisfied,

Answer, O God, this prayer of mine
  And send the Angel Death to guide
  My soul upon that path of pride,

Where human weakness cannot kill
  The vigorous male enterprise,
That brands upon the human will
  The vision of Your splendid eyes
  Smiling to Hell from Paradise.

And when the last pale hour shall crown
  My days, O God compassionate,
Bid the dread Angel strike me down,
  Living as yet inviolate,
  With one blow swift and ultimate.

Spare me the pitiable tears
  Of death-bed friends, all agonies
Of wasting flesh and bone, the fears
  Of those dark stepping-stones to peace,
  The tortures of a long disease.

Spare me the melancholy sound
  Of muffled feet amid the gloom,
The mocking hush of laughter drowned
  Too suddenly, the shuttered room
  Stagnant and awful as the tomb.

Spare me the hammer-strokes of pain
  Which makes a coffin of the mind
Crawling about the broken brain,
  The lust of pleasure left behind
  Like memories of an eye grown blind.

Rather, O God, when I am bold
  To take the cup of life, and press
Upon my lips the wine-stained gold,
  Then, if it be Your will to bless,
  May Death complete my happiness.

# THE BATTLEFIELDS REVISITED.

## I. "THE HAPPY WARRIOR."

"IF I survive, I shall return again
  To Merville, Arras, Albert, Neuve-Chapelle,
  The towns of my companions who fell
As petals of a rose beneath the rain.

Yea, though the blood of friends be shed in vain,
  I that now pass the inmost gate of Hell
  Shall rise, and sing at last invincible
The song of thanksgiving among the slain."—

The prayer is answered. After many days
He comes once more to tread the ancient ways
  Where poppies deck old wounds with scarves of red,

Till seeing three frail crosses on a mound
He kneels awhile to kiss the tortured ground,
  Wishing he too were sleeping with the dead.

## II. ARRAS.

ROOFS flung aside like curtains, twisted beams
Stretching their blackened fingers to the sky,
Thin solitary gables looming high,
Fold, in the void, vague penitential dreams.

Before the moon, the cold cathedral gleams
A white-limbed giant, glad to sanctify
The new-built houses, whose foundations lie
As islands washed with melancholy streams.

The exiles have returned, and in the shade
Of narrow streets, an endless cavalcade,
Wanders with expectation to and fro,

Till at the sudden music of a band
They dance among the ruins hand in hand,—
And war becomes a tale told long ago.

## III. VIMY.

HERE have the emblems of calamity
Fringed with a tasselled flame the grey-black air,
While swollen eye-lids blinded with despair
Wept for the grave's reluctant mystery.

Here was the wine of life poured sombrely
Upon the soil of plains remote and bare,
Till Time the Mage with ceremonial care
Delivered offspring of the agony.

Amid the tangled wire the rose is born,
And no-man's-land with locks of golden corn
Quivers forgetful of the darkened hours,

While with a wistful smile the reaper sees
Gliding along a line of broken trees
The crumbling trench ablaze with yellow flowers.

## HILL-VISION.

NOT yet, not yet, O circle of the hills,
May we ascend the long magnificence.
Of your blue-shadowed slopes, to stand at last
Dazzled upon the crowning sun-dried ridge.
There leap the winds bearing the chaste white kisses
Of lively seas, and sweep a reckless wave
Of foam-flecked laughter to the mountain-tops.
There, in the pattern of wide-wheeling birds,
Is poised the intricate garland of the world.
These are the hills whence life's allurement beckons
Wistfully fascinating to the plain.

We dwellers of the plain are yet crushed down
By the enormous haze that like a scarf
Flutters above the body of the city.
We are enchained by net-work of canals
Clear-cut amid the buildings, idle waters
That through the marsh-mist faintly lap the roots
Of endless poplars. Sullenly harsh noon
Glances against the bricks and dies away.
Yet from the tower, the grand horizon gleams
With us for ever, and the burning eye
Can trace a pathway gliding in the rock,
By which, some day, the lover shall climb the hills.

## DECISION.

LET us become as Angels, taking wings
Of their essential flame. Within ourselves
We carve the city and the circling hills.
Why should we not then leap into the void
That floats between our life and our desire?
The kiss of darkness hurries on the flight
Over serene wide spaces. Fragrant air
Foams round the exultant shimmer of our wings.

They summon us, these images of ours,
That wisely we adore, the dancing Angels
Whirling white-winged within the mind of God,
To join the eternal measure, at whose beat
Deep song high-crested flies about the world.
The very dust amid the sunbeam dances.
Flames bow before us and the heavy sea
Throbs with the ultimate music of farewell.

We have created sea and flame and dust,
Moulding the earth in mental craftsmanship;
Yet finding it a sorry paradise
We have no boldness, we that now are winged

For higher flight than eagles; for no bird
May enter the immeasurable blue
That is our sky, nor flap its feathered wings
Amid the gales that speed us on our way.

We have created wings of tribulation,
Which, like a painful sowing, bears ripe fruit
Hanging before us from the weighted bough.
The golden moments of our loitering
Teem with full promise. Armed with flashing wings
We will forsake the city for those hills,
Where in supreme and bold experience
Merged, the ideal at last becomes the real.

## THE END OF THE FLIGHT.

THUS fared they, till the distant mountain-ridge,
So long besought and at the last attained,
Faded away behind them, like dim hands
Spectrally raised in prayer. Below, the sea
Lay calm and languid as an idle friend
Smiling farewell, too weak to stretch an arm
To speed the parting of companions.

Meanwhile the sky spreads gleaming as the throne
Of the ascending sun, and tumbled clouds
Do homage to his glory, and consume
The sacrament of flame wherewith he bleeds.

And they who forged affliction into wings,
The dwellers of the plain, now liberated
From dusty crawling on the earth's cold roads,
Mount higher to the Godhead. They have dared
To crave celestial wine, and open-eyed
Braving eternal blindness, to encounter
The beatific vision. They have seen

The circle of the world ablaze with pride,
Glory of ships, and glory of great cities
And greater yet the glory of those hills
That were the walls around their universe.
But more awaits them, and the flesh of man
Albeit winged, shall still be purified
Within the fatal furnace of the soul.

"Why live," cry they, "since we have seen all life
Spread like a garment, marked the cunning folds
Wherein the fruitless mystery was draped,
Touched the vast rents that lie beneath the bloom
Of surface-colour? Why must we encase
With such frail rags the silver nakedness
Of spiritual limbs? Why mortify
The truth with veils, the veritable flesh
With the long futile struggle? We are wise
Who glide pale-browed into oblivion,
Burnt out as candles in the sun's bright ray.
Come, destiny and claim us. Fling aside
The vestments of our pitiable birth,
And gather us again into the void.
Though we are born of dust, yet lips of flame
Have kissed us, and we burn . . ."

On earth, the trees
Shuddered and bent their heads, while cities moaned

Amid the clangour of their servitude.
Even the sea swept quivering to the land,
While in the air the clouds dropped gently down
To couch on the horizon. Sky alone
Remained the tranquil palace of the sun.

But the undaunted heavenly voyagers
Still cried or seemed to cry:—
"Though no farewell
Of human hearts may speed our enterprise,
No kind desire accompany our flight,
(In which assuredly eternal death
Or life eternal shall be our reward),
Fear lies behind us like the mountain-peaks
That we have scaled.
Nay, we are reconciled;
For, always in the past, the monstrous herds
That went unwinged and wallowed in the slime
Of earthly furrows, gazed askance at us
And mocked our aspiration, tortured us
To fit their needs, and darkly turned away
Their eyes when we ascended into Heaven."

Silence hung limp around them. Face to face
Were they with God incarnate in the sun.
Now molten wings of Icarus, be strong;

For as each rose and strained more loftily
To touch the white-hot rim of the whirling globe
That thundered through the heavens, from the void
Strange rods of darkness crept and struck their eyes,
Quenching the light, until the last faint spark
Fled upwards leaving blindness.
Heavy-limbed
Amid the death-grasp, fell the conquerors
Splendidly down to common earth again.

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